THE SAVAGE ART OF
BOB LARKIN
BOB LARKIN '07

THE SAVAGE THANKS OF BOB LARKIN!

I'd like to thank the following people:
Sal Q. for taking on this overwhelming project to produce this book.
Steve Roman for getting Sal Q. interested in doing this book and all his help in writing and checking the titles, dates, etc. of every illustration.
Bob Keenan for his great eye, designing the pages and his great sense of humor.
Joe Jusko and Alex Ross for taking time from their very busy schedules to write the intro and afterword. Also to all my loyal fans...without them I'd be nothing.
Every art director and publisher who was willing to hire me.
And finally my wife Fran for putting up with me for 34 years.
Plus my three children, Ken, Claire and Holly for putting up with Dad the Maniac.

Pantha, Vampirella's best girlfriend, stalks her prey in this magazine cover for Warren Presents #8, a collection of Pantha stories (1980).

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"I Want to be Bob Larkin!" *Introduction by Joe Jusko*

It was 1977, and I had just graduated from the High School of Art & Design in New York City. I also had chosen not to attend any of the colleges I was accepted to, as impatience and a certain amount of impetuousness had driven me to seek work instead of furthering my education.

But what to do?

In spite of being awarded the DC Comics Award of Excellence in cartooning upon graduation, I knew that I was not fast enough to earn a living drawing a monthly comic book, which had been my goal since I was old enough to hold a pencil. I also was a little dismayed that unless you did *all* of the art yourself, it was a bit of a crapshoot as to what the final product would look like.

I decided I would paint covers instead. I would be able to do single pieces, control the final product and not worry about a large, monthly workload.

The fact that I had never even *held* a paintbrush didn't deter me in the least! Ah, the blissful ignorance of youth.

I spent the next few months playing with different mediums, trying to gain *some* kind of competence in my newly-chosen field. I truly had no idea what I was doing.

The one thing I *did* know, is that I wanted my work to look as perfectly composed, rendered and eye-catching as the guy who painted so many of the great covers for Marvel Comics' b&w magazine line.

"I want to be Bob Larkin!" I told myself.

There were several artists who seemed to be getting more attention in the field in the late '70s, but I was captivated by the lifelike quality in Bob Larkin's work.

Marvel Comics' space-opera hero Star-Lord fights for his life on this cover for Marvel Preview #18 (1975).

I sought out everything I could find by this (I soon discovered) incredibly prolific artist. This Larkin guy was equally proficient in all genres, from Fantasy, to Science Fiction to westerns, and everything in between.

His covers made you *want* to pick up whatever book they were on, whether you had an interest in what was inside or not.

I learned that Bob had ever so quietly become one of the most sought after cover artists in the business.

As I mentioned, his work was *everything* I wanted mine to be; well drawn, well rendered, with an impeccable color sense and ability to convey mood. More importantly, though, it was something else.

It was ***consistent***.

No matter how many covers I saw, they *all* were of the highest quality. Not a bum in the bunch. No wonder he was in such high demand!

When I finally conned editors Rick Marshall and Ralph Macchio into giving me some cover work up at Marvel, I found that Bob was considered the gold standard there. I studied every cover he did for hours, trying to figure out how he did things, actually copying several figures on practice boards in an attempt to make my work competitive with his.

No such luck!

I was in the office one day when Bob delivered the cover to Marvel Preview #18, which had Starlord battling a lion-headed warrior on an asteroid. The lion guy's red jumpsuit glowed on the original painting in a way that could never carry over into print. I just sat there quietly as he was bombarded with praise from everyone who saw the painting, knowing that I was *way* out of my league. I felt really lucky to be getting any work at all with this guy around! I realized how far I had to go, and Bob's work was my constant inspiration.

Some months later, I had several more covers under my belt, and was up at Marvel looking for my next job. Ralph told me that Larkin had been in the office earlier that week, saw my most recent Hulk cover, and commented on what a good job I had done. I was floored, and for the very first time felt confident that I had a chance. I'm sure Bob doesn't remember that, but I've never forgotten it.

Bob Larkin is one of the best painters I've ever seen. His body of work is prodigious, the quality of which is seldom surpassed. He paints every character as you *know* they should look! Bob's Savage Sword of Conan covers are the best ever done for that book, and his Doc Savage covers were the perfect follow up to James Bama. If there was ever a more intimidating assignment than following Bama, I can't think of it, yet Bob hit it out of the park. His series of covers are now every bit as revered as the Bama's. And rightly so.

As lucky as I am to be able to call Bob Larkin my friend these many years later, I am even more fortunate to have realized the genius in his work at a time that I was looking for a voice and direction in my own. Much of what I know today I learned from Bob Larkin. He would never believe that, as humble as he is (the Greats always are) but it's a fact. Bob became *my* gold standard. I think I chose well.

"I want to be Bob Larkin!"

I said it 30 years ago.

I still say it today.

- Joe Jusko

This page and opposite: Cover art for Dell's line of Babylon 5 novels (1997).

Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

Book #9: To Dream in the City of Sorrows

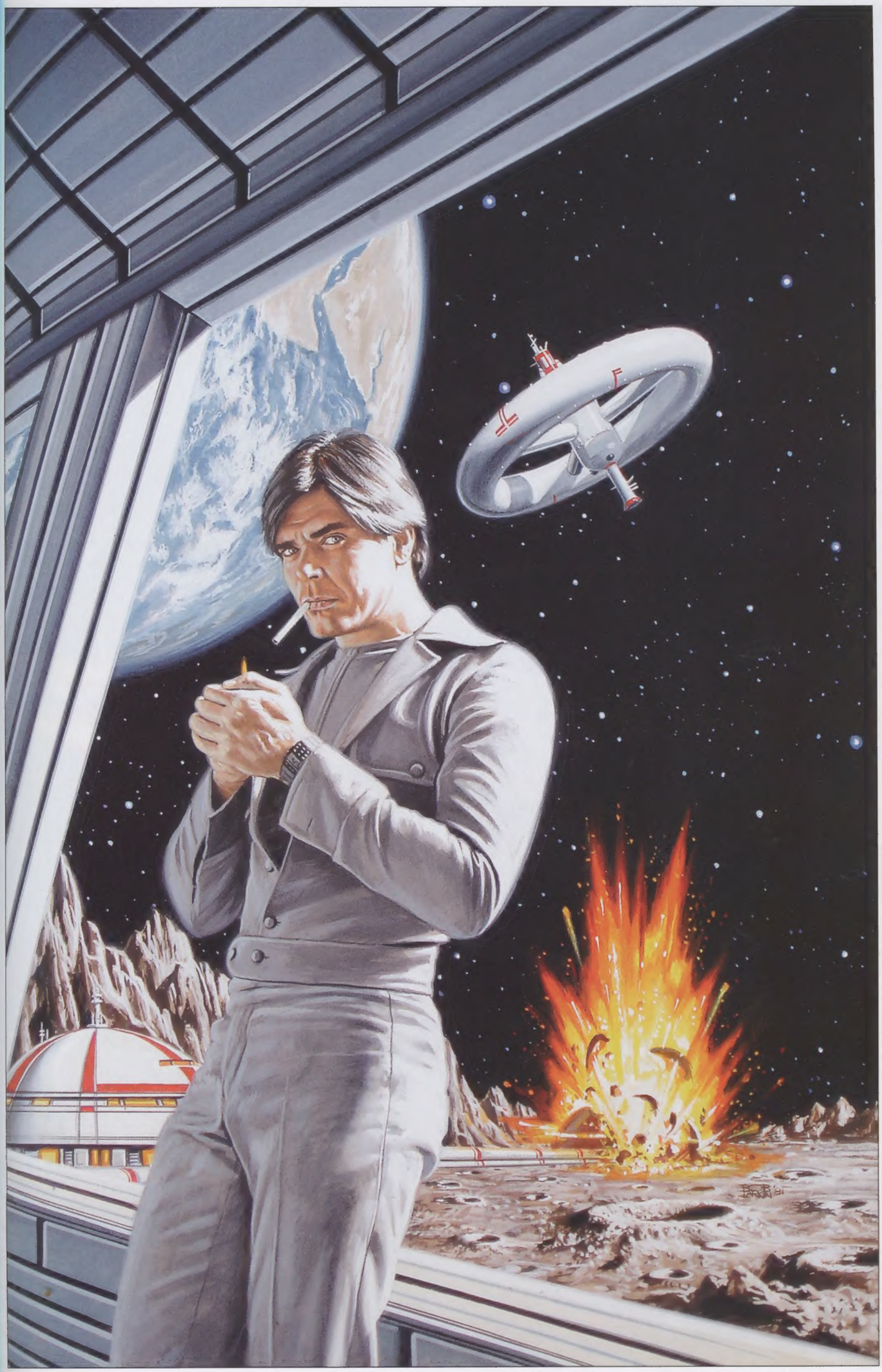
Book #3: Blood Oath

Book #1: Voices

Book #6: Betrayals

This page:
Book #7: The Shadow Within

On Painting the Babylon 5 Universe:
"The biggest problem for me wasn't painting the actors, I do that stuff all the time. It was drawing that space station! Having to draw all those solar panels and little details made me nuts, especially when I'd get a call from the art director asking if I could turn around a painting in two or three days!"



Opposite page:
Wraparound cover for Marvel Super Special #8: Battlestar Galactica (1978), the comics adaptation of the TV pilot.

Bottom left:
Final cover art for Marvel Super Special #3: Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1978). The movie was adapted for comics by writer/editor Archie Goodwin and artist Walt Simonson.

Bottom right:
Original cover painting for the same special, which ran into trouble due to the film's then top-secret plot. *"Archie [Goodwin] got a call from Steven Spielberg after he saw the painting, and Spielberg told him it was all wrong. They were supposed to be running **towards** the UFO. Archie asked if I could fix it and I told him no because it would take too much work. It would be easier for me to totally repaint it, so I wound up redoing the whole thing in twenty-four hours."*

This page:
Mathew Swain #2: When Trouble Beckons, starring the late Mike McQuay's sci-fi private detective (1981).

STONE

Opposite page:
Face of the Enemy,
Richard Fawkes's
space opera novel.
(1999).

This page:
The Windhover Tapes:
Fize of the Gabriel
Ratchets.
Book 3 in the late
Warren Norwood's
sci-fi novel series
(1983)

BOB LARKIN '01

Opposite page:
"A Fiery Return," dramatizing Russia's MIR space station falling to Earth, painted for Scholastic News (2001).

This page top:
Marvel Super Special #15: Star Trek: The Motion Picture (1979).

Bottom:
Marvel Super Special #16: Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back (1980).

This page top left:
Harcourt Fenton Mudd
(aka Harry Mudd) poses with
his android harem on this
cover for the Star Trek novel
Mudd's Angels (1978).

Bottom right:
The Enterprise crew runs into
trouble in this
post—Star Trek:
The Motion Picture cover
(1979).

Following page:
Marvel Super Special #6:
Jaws 2 (1978).

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Opposite page top:
Hide your daughters! Here comes "The Man With the Biggest Penis" in this illustration for National Lampoon magazine.

Bottom left:
Which is the greater menace - Jaws II or the Nebbish? Marvel Comics' Crazy #43 (1978).

Bottom right:
Raider of the Lost Art: Obnoxio the Clown defaces Indiana Jones on this cover of Crazy, "the magazine that dares to be dumb" (1981).

This page:
Monsters From the Movies, Thomas G. Aylesworth's survey of creature features and the myths that inspired them (1984).

Opposite page:
Monsters of the Movies magazine #2 (1974), from Marvel Comics' short-lived attempt at creating its own version of Warren Publishing's Famous Monsters of Filmland.

This page:
Marvel's Tomb of Dracula magazine #3 (1979). The stand-in for the lord of vampires was the late Steve Holland, original Doc Savage model for James Bama and 1950s Flash Gordon TV-series star, who often posed for Larkin.

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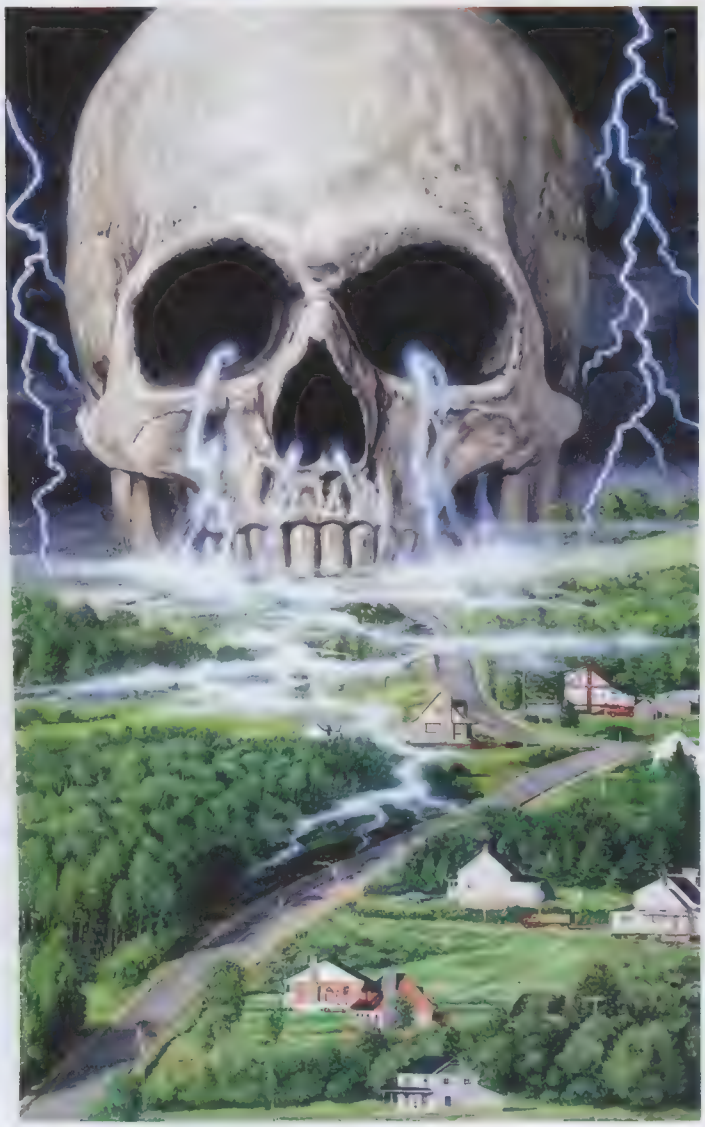

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Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

Haunt of Horror #4, featuring Marvel Comics' Gabriel the Exorcist (1974).

Rest You Merry, a Christmas—themed mystery novel (2001).

Monsters Unleashed! #5, starring Marvel's swamp monster, The Man-Thing (1979).

Death stalks the residents of a small town straight out of a Stephen King horror novel.

This page: Marvel's Haunt of Horror #1, with Larkin posing as the Wolfman (1974).

On Mrs. Frances Larkin, "Supermodel":
"I use a lot of models to pose for my paintings, sometimes I even do it myself if I don't have the time to get somebody. But what most people probably don't know is that my wife, Fran, is the girl in all three of those Marvel monster covers!"

Opposite page clockwise from left:

Doc Savage — The Fiery Menace

Doc Savage - Death Had Yellow Eyes

Doc Savage - The Goblins

This page: Special painting done for a limited edition print from Graphitti Studios

On working with Doc Savage model Steve Holland: *"When I took over doing the Doc covers from Jimmy Bama, I asked Steve Holland to come in and pose like he did for Jimmy--but I'd been working with Steve long before I ever got the Doc assignment. I just told him what I needed and he hit the mark every time. He was the fastest model I ever worked with. He'd come in and throw on the Doc clothes--I had the shirt and the baby oil, he had the pants, and the photographer, Bob Osonitch, had the boots--I'd show him a sketch and he'd give me a variation of poses to choose from. He was a total pro."*

This page top:
Doc Savage Omnibus 12

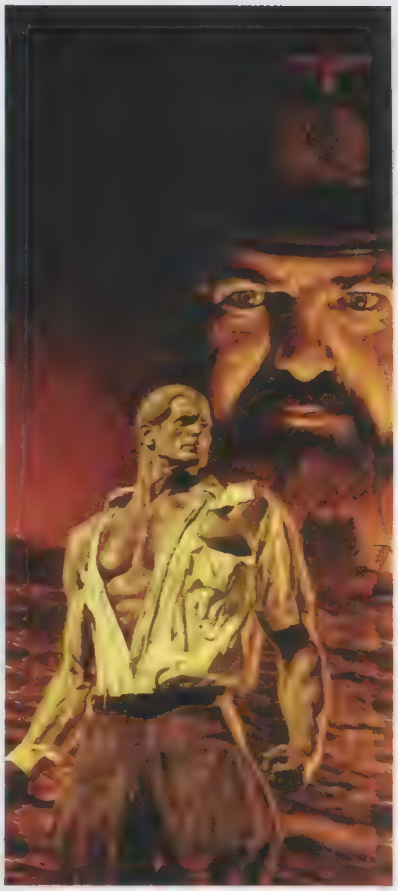
Below:
Doc Savage Omnibus 9

Following page
Clockwise from top left:

Doc Savage -
The Pharoah's Ghost

Unpublished cover painting to
Doc Savage -
The White Elf

Doc Savage -
Time Terror



Opposite page:
Commissioned piece for art collector Terry Allen of Doc Savage and his cousin Pat.
Note - the model for Pat was Terry's wife Dawn.

This page clockwise from left:
Unpublished cover painting to Doc Savage - The Running Skeletons

Doc Savage - Hell Below

Doc Savage - Golden Man

This page:
Doc Savage
Classic Man of
Bronze pose

Following page:
Cover painting to
Hulk Magazine #4.
The Great Green
One gets the old
Frankenstein's
Monster treatment
from some angry
villagers.
Guess they didn't
get the memo about
gamma-irradiated
scientists who get
stronger when they
get madder.
Silly villagers!

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Opposite page top:
Promotional art created for a Marvel Comics' licensing division internal report (2007).

Bottom left:
Cover art for the Fireside Books' trade paperback The Amazing Spider-Man (1979).

Bottom right:
Dazzler #1 (1981). Next to his Hulk poster (see pg. 64) and Doc Savage covers, this iconic image of Marvel's disco-influenced superheroine is one of Larkin's most fondly remembered pieces.

This page:
Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, spinning webs and messing about with Manhattan traffic patterns!

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Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

Captain America battles the Nazi vampire Baron Blood on the cover of a Cap graphic novel.

Bishop poster art for Marvel's X-Men line.

Marvel Super Special #5, starring the rock band KISS (1978).

This page:
Wolverine and Sauron duke it out high above the Savage Land on this cover for the novel X-Men: Law of the Jungle (1998).

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Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

Spider-Man: Mayhem in Manhattan, the first original novel starring Marvel's web-slinging superhero (1978).

Doctor Octopus on the attack: Spidey's arch-nemesis in trading-card art for Fleer's Ultra Spider-Man series (1995).

Spidey meets Spider-Man 2099 in this promotional poster for Marvel's short-lived line of futuristic superhero comics.

Mr. Fantastic tries to play peacemaker (again) between the Thing and the Silver Surfer in this Fantastic Four painting.

This page: Marvel's super-spy: Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.

X-Men, Doctor Doom, Spider-Man, Ghost Rider, the Hulk, the Punisher, and Ravage: An overview of all the major characters in the futuristic "Marvel 2099" line of comics.

The Punisher tries to relax with some quiet rock-climbing, but to no avail, as a pair of heavily-armed attack helicopters swoop in for the kill.
Mr. Castle hates when that happens!

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Opposite page:
Iron Fist busts loose in the cover painting for Marvel's Deadly Hands of Kung Fu #19.

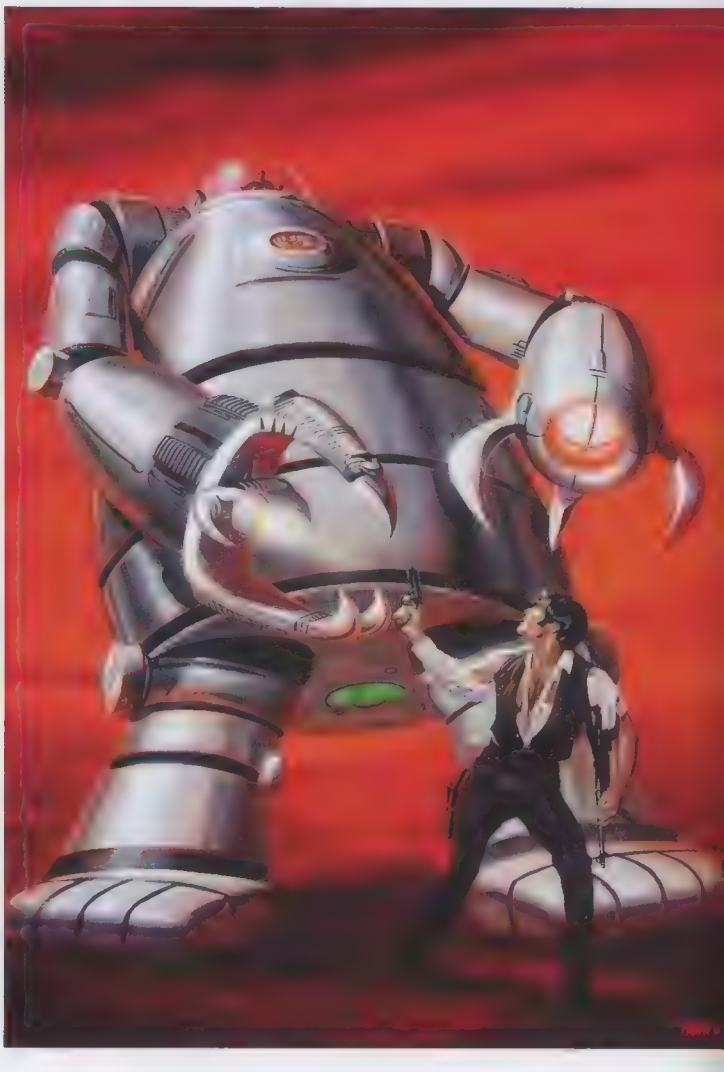
This page:
Cover painting to Wild Cards.

This page: Cover painting to Lorelei #1, with the soul-stealing succubus posing in the ruins of a demon-infested New York (2000).

Following page: Cover painting to The Rook #2, starring Warren Publishing's time-traveling adventure hero. Standing in front of the Time Machine from H.G. Wells's novel, Restin Dane waits for the arrival of the Morlocks... (1980)

Who Was the Rook?

"For all the Rook covers, and a lot of my work at that time like the Savage Sword of Conan covers, I asked Steve Holland to come in and pose. I just told him what I needed and he hit the mark every time. The guy was a total pro."



Opposite page clockwise from top left:

Rook #3

Rook #12

Rook #8

Rook #9

This page:
Cover painting to the graphic novel Conan - The Ravagers of Time, featuring Conan, Red Sonja, and King Kull.

BARRIN '79

Opposite page:
Savage Sword of Conan #44

This page:
Conan model Steve Holland strangles Larkin's photographer friend, Marc Witz, in this cover painting to Savage Sword of Conan #89. No knives were harmed in the making of this picture.

Opposite page clockwise from top left:

Savage Sword of Conan #103

Savage Sword of Conan #27

Savage Sword of Conan #82

Savage Sword of Conan #198

This page: Savage Sword of Conan #141

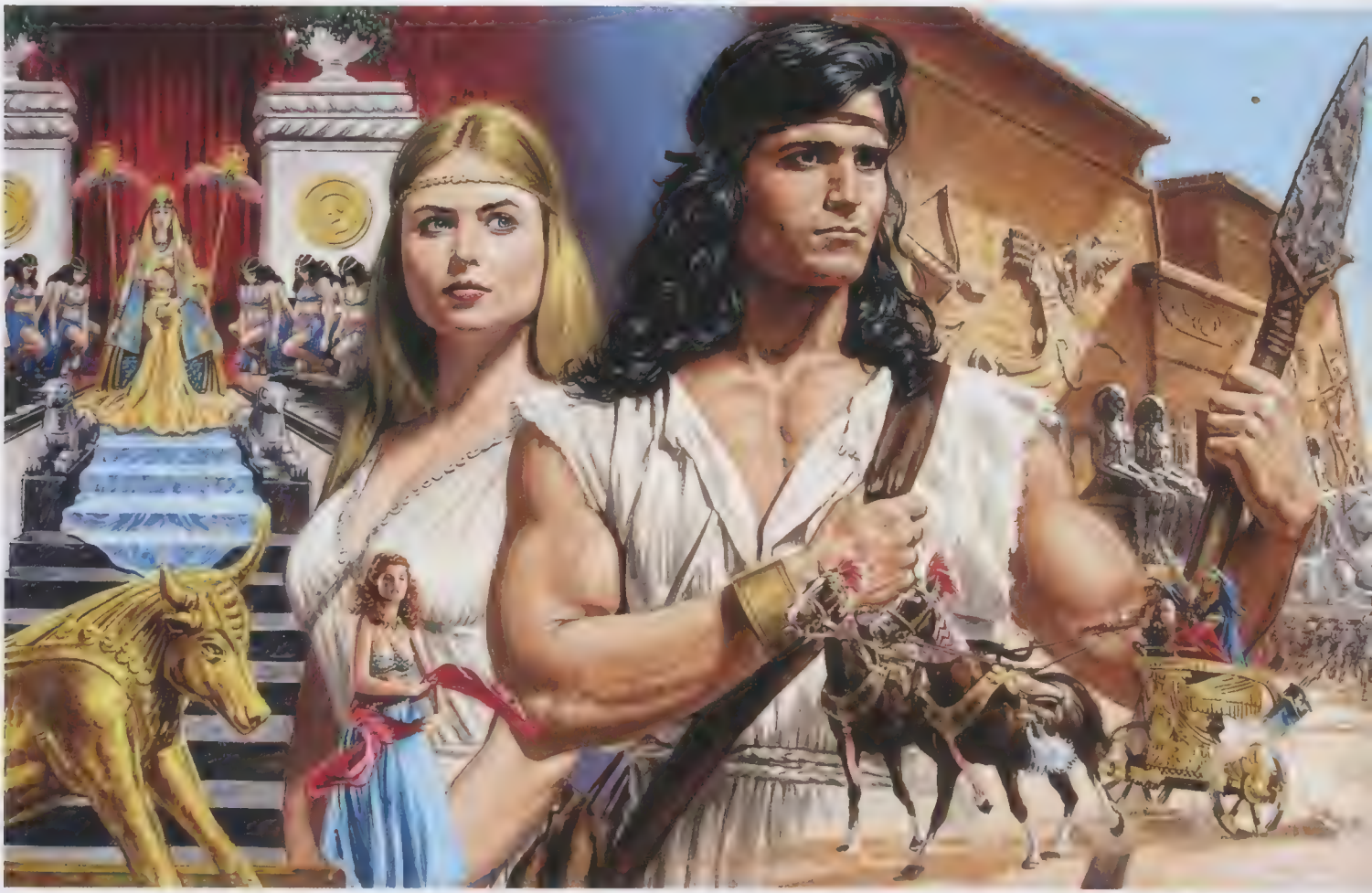
Opposite page:
Savage Sword of
Conan #192

This page:
Savage Sword of
Conan #137

Opposite page:
Savage Sword of Conan #43

This page top:
Shining King: Book 18 in Peter Danielson's "Children of the Lion" series (1995).

Bottom:
The Death of Kings: Children of the Lion, Book 17 (1994).



This page top:
Prophets and Warriors: Children of the Lion, Book 15 (1993).

Bottom:
Triumph of the Lion: Children of the Lion, Book 19 (1996).

Following page top:
Ancient Revelations of the Bible (1995).

Bottom left:
"The Archer Strikes Back!" Promotional TV Guide ad for an NBC TV-movie.

Bottom right:
Francis, Brother of the Universe: Marvel Comics' biography of St. Francis of Assisi (1980).

Opposite top:
Outpost!: Wagons West – The Frontier Trilogy, Book 3 (1993).

Opposite bottom:
Wagons West

This page: A montage of scenes grace the cover of a Western romance novel.

Opposite page:
Shelter, a Western adventure novel series.

This page:
Angelique, heroine of a series of romance novels set in the French court of Louis XIV (1979).

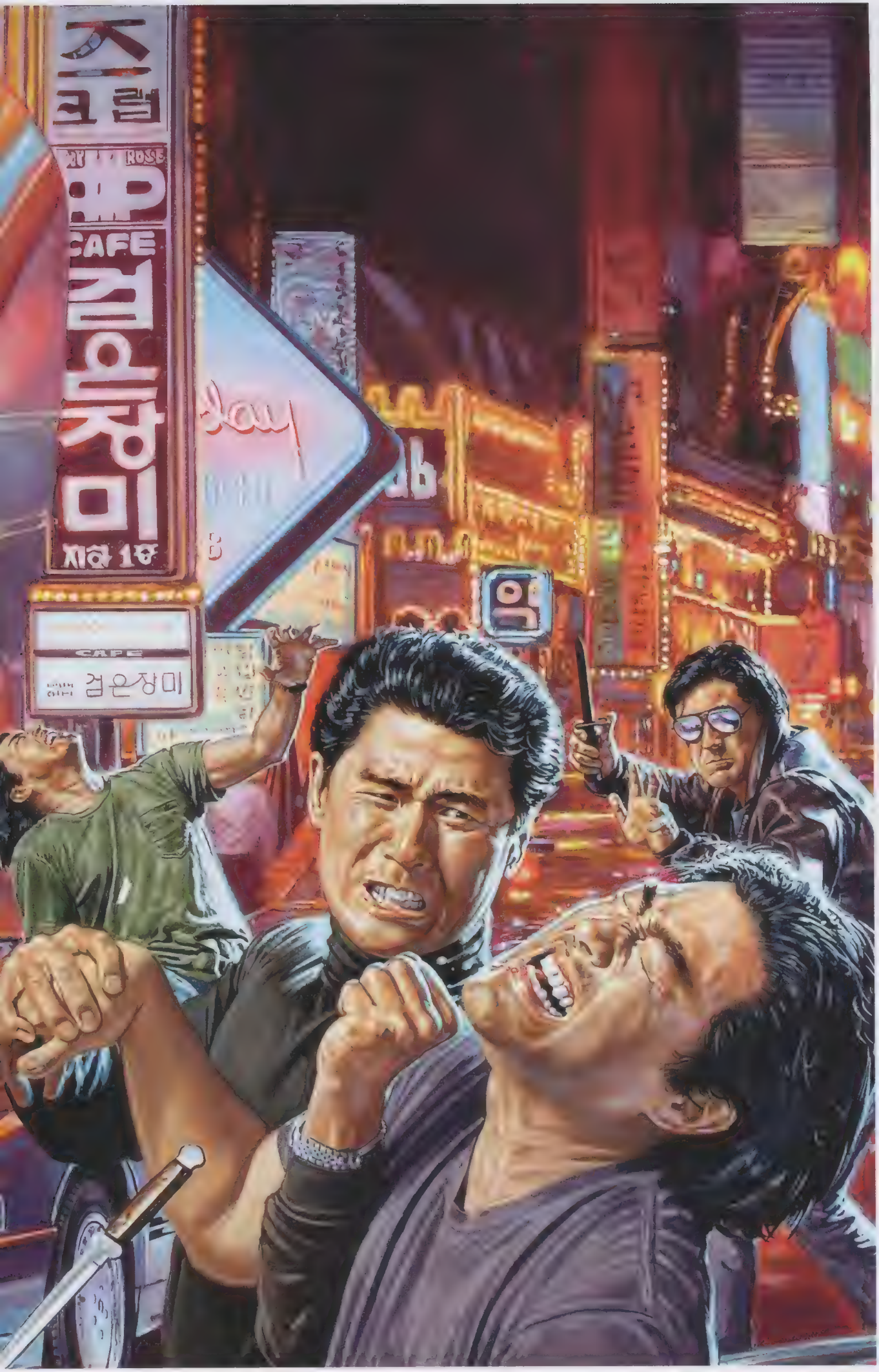
A♠
K♠
Q♠

Opposite page:
Cover painting for Shelter #3

This page:
The Sheriff and the Branding Iron Murders, a mystery by author D. R. Meredith (1992).

U.S. AIR FORCE

U.S. AIR FORCE



Opposite page:
Promotional TV Guide ads for the ABC series Call to Glory, starring Craig T. Nelson.

This page:
Actor, editor, and G.I. Joe comics writer Larry Hama plays a trio of bad guys in this action-packed cover painting for the novel Korea Kill, for which he posed (1990).

Opposite page:
A rugged, square-jawed American hero saves the girl and brings the pain to the Red Chinese in this adventure novel painting.

This page:
Cover painting for Bloodtide, Robert Kalish's nuclear thriller (1985).

This spread: Cover art for author Dan Schmidt's Eagle Force adventure novel series.

Book #2: Death Camp Colombia (1989).

Book #3: Flight 666 (1989).

Book #5: Ring of Fire (1990).

Book #7: Edge of the Blade (1990).

Afterword by Alex Ross

Larkin's most famous comics-related painting: the Incredible Hulk poster (1984), later reissued in 2003 to tie-in with Ang Lee's Hulk movie.

Bob Larkin's work is the first fully-realized look at what super-heroes would be. In that transitional decade of the seventies, between the creative burst of Marvel Comics' characters coming into being in the sixties and the later honing of the business in the eighties, Bob's painted work brought the art form of comics to new, unseen-before heights. Producing covers for Marvel's black and white magazine lines and their first trade paperback collections of classic material put Bob's work before more people than just your regular comic buyers. Young people like I was would see his striking renditions of Spider-Man or Hulk real, we before action would m their wa televisio film. Th thought Bob inj into his derings make th fantastic worlds illustrated before with only pen and ink an color seem alive and real for the first time. Nothing was m inspiring to me as a young wannabe comic artist than to b like Bob and try my best to breathe life into dreams like he

- Alex Ross

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